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ABSTRACT

Transition into Employment is a 2-year project concerned with the development of employment-related programs in British further education colleges for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The project aims to encourage a decisive curricular change in provision for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties, with employment seen as a primary curriculum objective. Project participants proposed a set of aims for employment-related education and training: (1) help students prepare for and obtain appropriate employment; (2) improve the employment status of students; and (3) demonstrate adult status in society. The project identified five key issues being explored by participating institutions, with one local education agency and one regional advisory council. The issues cover five broad areas: curriculum, staff training and development, multiagency approaches, policy and planning, and employment opportunities. Managers and planners should consider the following aspects in program development: an employment focus, student involvement, teaching and learning, Training and Enterprise Councils and output-related funding, guidance and support, and performance indicators. (A list of participating colleges and a list of satellite projects and the relevant contacts are also included.) (YLB)

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TRANSITION INTO EMPLOYMENT 1

DEVELOPING EMPLOYMENT-LED PROVISION IN FE COLLEGES FOR LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

November 1991

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INTRODUCTION

This is the first of two bulletins describing the work of Transition into Employment, a two-year Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED)-funded project concerned with the development of employment-led provision in further education (FE) colleges for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The project is running from September 1990 to August 1992, and the work is co-ordinated by Alison Boulton, Special Needs Development Officer Post 16, Somerset Local Education Authority (LEA).

The primary aim of the project is to develop and enhance employment-led provision for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The cumulative experience gained and lessons learned by the colleges involved in the project will be widely disseminated in order to encourage more FE colleges to develop an employment focus for all their learning programmes and courses. There will be important messages too for Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), LEAs and others responsible for policy, planning and funding.

This bulletin :

- introduces the work of the project
- indicates the issues that are being explored
- offers some early lessons which have emerged
- highlights the issues for institutional managers
- provides readers with a number of useful points of contact
- suggests other relevant FEU publications for those involved/interested in this area

The bulletin is the first of a series of FEU publications which will support colleges developing employment-led provision in this key area which is specifically highlighted in the recent White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century*. Over the next year FEU plans to publish :

- a second bulletin on the work of this project
- a set of guidelines on delivering NVQs to learners with special needs
- a handbook on developing employment-led opportunities in FE colleges for learners with special needs

Other related work includes a small project to investigate how colleges, LEAs and TECs are using *Planning FE: Equal Opportunities for people with disabilities or special educational needs: A Handbook*. This will be reported on in the New Year.

Related FEU publications

Recent FEU work has included a contribution to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) International Disablement Action Programme. One outcome of this work was the development of the 'Employability Package' (from *Enabled to Work*) which is being used within Transition into Employment (q.v.).

FE colleges can play a key role in providing people who have disabilities and learning difficulties with employment skills. To be effective in this work college providers will have to make significant changes to their provision and how they deliver it. This means new skills for college tutors. The project aims to explore how these skills can be developed and to test the uses of the FEU/TEED/Skill staff development pack *Learning Support*.

BACKGROUND

Focusing on employment

The starting point for this work is a belief that employment is a legitimate goal for all learners. Those with disabilities and learning difficulties are entitled to the same range of opportunities to develop vocational skills as all other learners. Some of them may become skilled to very high levels. Others will attain skills at lower levels but their achievements should be equally valued. Provided they have appropriate access to learning and learning support they can play their full part in the life of the college, the community and the economy.

People with disabilities and learning difficulties are increasingly demanding the right to the effective training and employment which is an important element in the

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achievement of adult status. There is a good deal of evidence, based on work carried out by the Further Education Unit (FEU), the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), and in other countries, suggesting that given appropriate training and support, people with disabilities and learning difficulties can obtain and retain a wide range of jobs.

Europe and international comparisons

Although there have been some encouraging developments in the UK we still lag behind other parts of Europe, Canada and the USA where there is a much more positive approach to the potential and achievements of people with disabilities and learning difficulties. This is seen not only as a matter of social justice but also of making the fullest use of a nation's human resources. Often it is reinforced by legislation which opens doors in education, training and employment.

The context

The project aims to encourage a decisive curricular change in provision for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. Employment should not be seen in terms of a 'bolt-on' careers or multi-skills class but as a primary curriculum objective.

Since the project began employment opportunities in general and for people with disabilities and learning difficulties especially have narrowed because of the current recession. Nevertheless the case for an employment focus remains, not simply because of the question of social justice but because of:

- the need to be prepared for change in labour market conditions
- the underlying demographic trends
- the enormous advances IT can bring in learning support
- changes in the organisation and location of employment
- changes in the kinds of skills needed in employment

There is a danger that unless people with disabilities and learning difficulties are given access to employment-led opportunities in FE colleges they will be 'handicapped' more by institutional inflexibility and resistance to change than by their actual disability.

Good practice for colleges

Many of the approaches used to promote employment-led opportunities for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties are the same as those widely regarded as best practice in FE. These include:

- developing a partnership and multi-agency approach
- providing for choice and relevance
- using flexible methods of delivery
- offering individualised learning programmes
- action planning
- recording achievement
- developing access to NVQs

This means that it is already possible to enhance what is on offer to learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. It also means that specialist tutors can make significant inputs to college development programmes.

KEY ISSUES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT-LED PROVISION

Aims

At a recent workshop, project participants proposed a set of aims for employment-led education and training. These were:

- to help students prepare for and obtain appropriate employment
- to improve the employment status of students
- to demonstrate adult status in society

In order to meet these aims, students with special needs, like all other students, need entitlements to the following:

- counselling and guidance
- accreditation of prior learning
- an individual action plan
- access to relevant qualifications
- a record of achievement
- a curriculum based on core skills, employability skills, social skills, prevocational and vocational skills

The project has identified a number of key issues which participating institutions are exploring, together with one LEA and one Regional Advisory Council (RAC). Each institution will explore and report on a particular issue, or set of issues, and inform the project about some wider concerns. Local and regional bodies are looking at ways of advancing this work through LEA initiatives and regional networks.

The issues have been grouped within five broad areas:

- curriculum
- staff training and development
- multi-agency approaches
- policy and planning
- employment opportunities

SOME COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

Curriculum

Employability

The 'Employability Package' from *Enabled to Work* (FEU) is being used by a number of colleges involved in the project as a basis for curriculum development activity. In North Tyneside College it underpins work on self-advocacy with learners with severe learning difficulties. Tutors at the college are working on the development of appropriate communication skills for the workplace.

EMPLOYABILITY PACKAGE

Research involving employers, representatives of placement and preparation agencies, and people with disabilities themselves has demonstrated a consensus about the general requirements which a young person needs to meet to be employable - the employability package.

In order to be employable, it is thought that a young person should be:

- **reliable**
- **conscientious**
- **responsible**
- **motivated to work**
- **able to relate to colleagues**
- **able to get to and from work**
- **able to understand and carry out instructions**
- **acceptable in terms of personal hygiene and self-presentation**
- **acceptable in terms of social behaviour**
- **able to respond pleasantly and co-operatively**
- **able to survive in the world of work**
- **able to work without constant supervision**
- **able to take the initiative**
- **able to keep work separate from other aspects of their life**
- **have an appropriate degree of personal autonomy**

From *Enabled to Work* (FEU,1989)

In North Hertfordshire College tutors are examining the role of work simulation and mini-enterprise as preparation for work experience for learners with learning difficulties. They are also working on transferability of skills from the classroom to the workplace and one workplace to another.

Assessment

Tutors at Pengwern Hall, a MENCAP College, and at North Tyneside College are working on assessment issues related to learners with severe learning difficulties. They are looking at approaches which:

- **place the learner at the centre of the assessment process;**
- **may be applied in a range of campus and community-based settings;**
- **are manageable and intelligible to learners, tutors and those in external agencies/employment.**

At Oaklands College in Hertfordshire, where learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are involved in a Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) course, work is being undertaken on pre-course assessment. At Penwith College where a CPVE course is being developed for people with learning difficulties, tutors are working on assessment and accreditation issues.

NVQs

Oaklands College is also developing work-based assignments relating to NVQ Level 1 for students with learning difficulties. More work associated with the assessment issues for learners with physical disabilities relating to NVQs in areas such as Business and Administration, Business and Finance, Horticulture and Design is being carried out at the National Star Centre at Cheltenham.

The project has links with Wigan College where there is a major project on assessment and access to NVQs in Catering for learners with severe learning difficulties. The college is working with the Hotel and Catering Training Company, the Institute of Public Health, the Lead Body (LB) and others to develop competence-based assessments leading to recognised qualifications in food hygiene as required by the new Food Act.

Staff development and training

The provision of opportunities for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties to develop vocational skills implies staff training and development for :

- **vocational tutors**
- **specialist tutors offering learning support**
- **managers and administrators**

Otley College of Agriculture and Horticulture has developed a NVQ Level 1 Land-based Industries programme which is being delivered by non-specialist vocational tutors. An analysis of their training needs has shown that acquiring skills in developing individual learning programmes is a priority. *Learning Support*, the staff development resource pack, is being used for training sessions with these tutors at the colleges.

Learning Support training materials are being used selectively with other colleges in the project and being related to locally identified staff training needs.

LEARNING SUPPORT

***Learning Support* is a staff development resource pack sponsored by TEED and produced jointly by FEU and Skill. It is designed to help prepare tutors across the college to work with learners who have disabilities and learning difficulties.**

***Learning Support* provides a range of practical staff development activities together with a 'User's Guide'. FEU would be interested in hearing about how colleges are using this pack especially in relation to employment-focused provision..**

Multi-agency approaches

Colleges play an important role in bringing together agencies to support learners with disabilities and learning difficulties.

The South West Association for Further Education and Training (formerly an RAC) is co-ordinating work around these issues. Particular emphasis is being placed on strategies for involving and working with employers. Two colleges, Bournemouth and Poole College and Yeovil College, are investigating supported work placements.

South Devon College is reporting on how the local authority social services and the education department can use joint appointments and develop joint provision for learners with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

Wiltshire LEA is looking at the role of the Disabled Persons Act 1986 in promoting multi-agency collaboration which enhances progression opportunities for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. The focus for this activity is Trowbridge College.

North Tyneside College and Coleg Glan Hafren in Cardiff are both involved in initiatives with the local social services, based around training workshops for learners with severe learning difficulties. At Coleg Glan Hafren, work will identify the components of successful work experience, and then use this information to help students to produce realistic individual action plans.

The National Star Centre and Pengwern Hall are funded by independent voluntary organisations and are outside the maintained FE sector. Their involvement is evidence of FEU's active commitment to multi-agency working. Voluntary sector providers offer the project contrasting and illuminating perspectives.

Policy and planning

Hertfordshire LEA is taking a lead role in relation to the policy and planning aspects of the project. Experience shows that curriculum development succeeds when it is supported by development at institutional and LEA level. In the context of the recent White Paper on FE, the role of TECs and other agencies with a planning role will also be tackled.

Each participating college will explore the role of senior management in supporting provision for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. Increased access to the vocational curriculum and integration will be an important aspect of this.

A number of colleges are linked to TECs which are piloting Training Credits. The impact of Training Credits is being monitored and a senior careers officer in Hertfordshire is tracking the progress of a number of school-leavers as part of the project.

Employment opportunities

Careers guidance services can play a key role in opening up opportunities in employment. Perceptions of people working in these services can influence what is offered to learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. Tutors at Bradford and Ilkley Community College are looking at the ways of enhancing guidance and counselling services and identifying the special services needed for this group of learners. This work is being carried out in conjunction with the Careers Service.

The work in Bradford will also identify the training and development needs of careers and learning support staff.

North Hertfordshire College is setting up a job club for adult students with learning difficulties leaving the college course. The club will offer support for them as they move into the employment market, as an extension of planned provision.

SOME INITIAL MESSAGES FOR MANAGERS AND PLANNERS

A number of common messages are emerging from the early work of the project which will be important for those involved in planning and developing overall college provision. This will include governors, principals, senior management teams and others. Practitioners and specialist tutors may need to draw the colleges' attention to these points.

Employment focus

Developing employment-led provision for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties involves colleges in:

- embedding the work (and the learners) in 'the mainstream';

- ensuring the work and the learners are seen as integral to the work of the college as a whole;
- ensuring that learners with disabilities and learning difficulties take their places in regular programmes alongside their peers.

Student involvement

Developing employment-led provision involves:

- ensuring that the student is the centre of the learning and assessment process;
- finding ways to provide learners with greater control and choice;
- using self-advocacy as a way of empowering learners;
- using self-advocacy as a way of improving the college's understanding of its customers' needs.

Teaching and learning

Developing employment-led provision means changing the ways in which the curriculum is delivered and the implications of this in terms of:

- development and adaptation of resources and materials;
- new classroom/workshop approaches by vocational tutors;
- re-organisation of the classroom/workshops towards more flexible learning environments;
- encouragement of co-teaching involving vocational tutors and specialist tutors;
- learning support centres being used to facilitate integration.

TECs and output-related funding

Developing employment-led provision means:

- addressing the role TECs can play in supporting the development of appropriate employment-led opportunities for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties;
- colleges working with TECS to find models of output-related funding which encourage, rather than hinder, the development of this kind of provision.

Guidance and support

Developing employment-led provision means:

- building systems which offer advice and support on a continuing basis while learners are in transition between school, college, training and employment;
- recognising that learners with disabilities and learning difficulties may need support within training and employment and while they are unemployed.

Performance indicators

Developing employment-led provision means:

- establishing within FE colleges means of measuring achievement and success that are appropriate to all groups of learners;
- using both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators.

The next project bulletin and the final guidelines will offer models and make recommendations on tackling these issues.

CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

The project has attracted considerable interest. FEU has received many valuable descriptions of work in colleges and on training schemes. These contributors are associated with the project under the description of 'satellites'.

The satellites make up part of an emerging informal national network of practitioners involved in this area of work. What is learned from the satellites will be used to supplement the findings of the project and contribute to the final guidelines.

Further examples of work, or comments on particular issues would be most welcome, especially in relation to:

- the impact of training credits
- examples of successful inter-agency approaches
- examples of successful approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
- examples of effective involvement of employers and co-operation with TECs
- NVQ issues and accreditation generally

You can contact the project co-ordinator Alison Boulton, Project Co-ordinator at ABE Centre, Blue School Annexe, Portway Avenue, Wells, Somerset BA5 2QF (tel: 0749 675430).

Contacts and information exchange

In order to help colleagues working in this area to draw upon each other's experience and expertise, this bulletin includes a project contact list of participating colleges and satellite projects:

Project participants	Contact
Bradford and Ilkley College	Joan Donkin/ Judith Knitton
Coleg Glan Hafren, Cardiff	Nichola Harris/ Christina Francis
Pengwern Hall, Mencap Residential College	John Harris
North Tyneside College	Ann Baynes/ Paul Lawrence
Otley College of Agriculture, Suffolk	Alan Hilliard/ Jeremy Linsell
Hertfordshire LEA:	Jill Aitchison
Oaklands College	Toni Bee/ Paul Smith
North Herts College	Helen Reason/ Eileen Parker
SW Association for FE:	Penny Crowther
Bournemouth and Poole College	Ros St Clavre
National Star Centre, Cheltenham	Helen Steel
Penwith College, Cornwall	Simon Coley
South Devon College Torquay	Jaqui Malek
Trowbridge College, Wiltshire	Alun Maddocks
Yeovil College Somerset	Di Wraight

Satellite projects

Satellite projects and the relevant contacts include:

Curriculum Development and Assessment related to National Proficiency Tests
Contact: Tessa Prior, Warwickshire College of Agriculture

Delivery and assessment for basic food hygiene certificate
Contact: Christine Jones, Wigan College of Technology

Utilising information technology to improve access through assessment and support
Contact: Steve Broadbent, Oldham College

Competence-based qualification project - hairdressing NVQ
Contact: Daryll Moody, Castle College, Sheffield

Community care project to improve employment opportunities
Contact: David Willetts, Continuing Education Dept, Birmingham City Council

Liaison with TECs in respect of Equal Opportunities
Contact: Lesley Oates, Northern Council of FE, Newcastle upon Tyne

Work preparation award - record of achievement
Contact: Roy Ainscough, East Midlands FE Council, Nottingham

Exploring progression routes through CPVE to Work
Contact: Phil Walkley, Swansea College, South Wales

Publications

FEU publications relevant to developing employment-led work include:

The Core Skills Initiative (1990)
Developing Self-Advocacy Skills (1990)
Individuality in Learning (1991)
Learning by Doing (1988)
Learning Support (1989)
NVQ bulletins 1,2,3 (1988)
NVQs in FE (forthcoming)
Planning FE - Equal opportunities for people with disabilities (1990)
Towards a Competence-based System (1984)
VET Briefing Notes - Administration, Business and Commercial (1990)
VET Briefing Notes - Retail (1990)
VET Briefing Notes - Hairdressing (forthcoming)
Working Together Series (1989) - *Work*; - *Self-Advocacy*; - *Technology*

These publications can be obtained from FE college libraries or from FEU.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this project please contact Alison Boulton, Project Co-ordinator at ABE Centre, Blue School Annexe, Portway Avenue, Wells Somerset BA5 2QF (0749 675430)
or
Tony Tait, Development Officer, FEU, Citadel Place, Tinworth St, London SE11 5EH (071 960 1280).

For details of the availability of this bulletin and other FEU publications, please contact the FEU Information Centre at the same address (ext. 302).

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